

# INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

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SUBJECT Living Conditions in P'yongyang

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1. In P'yongyang in July 1951 the population was small, there was little governmental activity, and no regular buildings were in use either as civilian or governmental quarters or offices. Few civilian homes were occupied, and residents spent most of their daylight hours in caves, most of them living in some type of air-raid shelter. Military deserters were careful about hiding in the regular shelters, however, because State Security Ministry agents checked them closely for defectors, deserters, and espionage agents. A few people with some social or political standing left their trench-homes at night to visit the cafes, which were in shabby houses. Residents who received no rice ration because they were not attached to any governmental organization had to live on one or two bowls of soup a day. The transportation of rice from outside the city was usually carried out by women, children, and the aged, who had no other way of obtaining rice than by performing this service, which was dangerous because of the frequent air attacks. They were given a small part of the rice they carried into P'yongyang. Laborers mobilized for bridge and road repair work, however, received two rice balls during their daily work. Such work was usually done at night, unless there was urgent need for the repair.
2. The public market in P'yongyang in July was closed during the day and opened only in the evening, when vegetables, dried fish, rice, and other commodities were sold. The price of rice in P'yongyang in July was 3,000 won per mal, about one and one-half times the peacetime price. Few could afford to purchase rice, however, and barter exchanges between farmers and their customers were frequent. Even the farmers worked at night, and they were told to be careful about showing smoke from their chimneys.

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3. Residents attached to no party or governmental organization suffered from various restrictions, and even citizenship identification or party membership cards were not acceptable as travel permits. A certificate issued by the chief of each organization of which the traveler was a member was required, and the documents had to state the reason for the travel.
4. Heavy casualties among the military forces and civilian population in Pyongyang were caused by the raid on that city 29 July from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. by United Nations planes. Hand and ox-carts moved through the city carrying bodies for several hours after the raid. A heavy rain, the worst in 70 years according to some residents, resulted in a secondary effect of the bombing, which broke some dikes in the city, thus causing large areas of the city to be flooded. Army food supplies were spoiled and oil in underground storage tanks was mixed with water or washed away. Residents said the Samak area suffered great damage about the same time because of a flood.
5. In September in the Pyongyang area most of the goods in the market were from China, few being produced in Korea because of the shortages of materials. There were a few rubber shoe factories and a tobacco factory operating in Pyongyang, however. Workers in these factories and government employees were supposed to receive a monthly ration of grain, 30 percent of it rice, but it was frequently issued a month or two late. The black market prices of general commodities were twenty times pre-war prices. Labor Party members lived in groups, their families having been sent to Manchuria. South Korean Labor Party members were mostly employed on farms, labor programs, or village people's committees, and were disappointed and dissatisfied with their lot, since the reality of life in North Korea for them was far different from what they had been led to expect. Many would have welcomed the opportunity to return to the ROK if they could have done so safely.